

608 Indiana Avenue., NW (Commercial Building)
Washington
District of Columbia

HABS No. DC-507

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

This vacant Nineteenth Century commercial structure occupies the eastern half of Lot 812. It consists of a main three-story volume with an irregular, basically rectangular plan. It has a three-story addition at the rear that dates from 1898. The structure consists of wood-framed interiors with brick bearing walls. The roof is flat, sloping slightly to the south.

The most prominent element on the Indiana Avenue facade is a full-height hexagonal bay window that projects from the two western thirds of the facade. The bay is wood framed and clad in ornamental sheet metal. The eastern portion of the facade is of brick and presents one square-headed window opening per floor. The entire facade is topped by a denticulated metal cornice.

The building is communicated with its neighbor to the west through openings in the party wall at all levels.

The interior of this building shows little alteration to the original layout. The first floor consists of one large show room with brick buttresses along the side party walls. The rear portion of the room is lighted from above by a shed skylight. The original uniform wood plank floors are exposed. There is a simple 5' high wood wainscot on all walls. The walls are plaster directly applied to the brick party walls. A straight stair with slender balusters and square newels along the east wall communicates all floors.

The basement projects past the line of the front facade into the area under the sidewalk to form a vault space. The vault is supported by brick arches. There are 6 8" x 8" columns which support a wooden beam which runs north-south. There is a concrete floor. The basement is lit by small windows at the base of the projecting bay window storefront.

The second and third floors have undergone little alteration.

The second floor has two rooms across the front of the building. The larger room is the size of the projecting bay window and has an original built-in cupboard. The smaller front room corresponds to the bay above the entry. There are two more small rooms in the main part of the building and a bathroom. In one, there is a sealed fireplace. The ell at the rear of the building has two small non-rectangular rooms and a small light well which has been enclosed at this level. The third floor repeats the layout.

of the second floor with the exception of the lightwell which is not enclosed.

The finishes throughout the second and third floors of the building are consistent; plaster is directly applied to brick party walls, and to lath on wood stud walls and ceiling lath. The floors are regular, narrow planks which are covered in places with linoleum.

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

This Nineteenth Century commercial building forms part of an outstanding row of similar structures that have surprisingly retained their traditional design integrity. The projecting hexagonal bay provides lively variety to the traditional urban rhythm, giving the entire row a strong character.

In isolation, the building itself appears to be quite old. Although the projecting bay may be a later addition, the part of the eastern facade plane that remains exposed is similar to its neighbors to the west and not unlike buildings typical of Washington between 1850 and 1870. No documentation exists to corroborate the date of original construction.

The interior of this building illustrates a typical 19th century approach to domestic living integrated with commercial space. There have been few, if any, changes made in the 20th Century, so that we have an accurate picture of what "living above the store" was like.

SIGNIFICANT FEATURES

Facade: The first floor is segregated from the upper facade by a simple metal cornice that spans the width of the building along the frontal plane of the bay projection. This lower level presents the main entrance door at the east, recessed between two large wood-clad pillars. The wood door is paneled and has a transom light above it. The hexagonal projecting show window is wood framed. The plinth of the window has recessed panels, which are glazed to provide light to the basement level. The glazing on the show window itself is divided on each of its facets into a main light and a transom light.

The eastern bay of the upper facade has a single window opening on each of its two floors. The windows have wooden sills and lintels. Each lintel is decorated at the top with running trim to act as an individual cornice. The sash are in wood, double-hung with six-

over-six lights. Each floor of the projecting bay has one similar sash on its oblique faces, two on the front one. All windows are separated from each other by metal clad mullions with recessed panels. Continuous spandrels occur on the bay at first, second and roof level. Again, they are metal clad, and on each facet of the bay, the plane is embellished by raised moldings which create rectangular panels. Inside each panel, a raised rinceau motif provides additional decoration.

The roof entablature has a wooden fascia panel that follows the projecting planes of the bay. It has applied metal decoration consisting of a denticulated cornice.

The bay may be an 1898 addition to a 3-bay, 3-story facade (Building Permit 1023/11-27-1898).